

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

St. Paul's Church
St. Paul's Church, Augusta,

BEFORE A PORTION OF THE

CLINCH RIFLES,

ON

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 5th, 1861,

BY THE REV. EDWARD E. FORD, D. D., RECTOR.

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ADDRESS.

I find it impossible, notwithstanding my physical weakness, to repress the strong impulse which I feel, from peculiar circumstances, this morning, to say a few words designed to occupy the place of the regular sermon. What little I may have strength to say, will naturally be expected to take shape and character, so far as the sacredness of the House of God, and its special solemnities of this morning, permit,* from the presence among us of some who are expecting, within the next two days, to swell the numbers of their many comrades in arms who are daily rushing forward at the call of their country, to do, and to suffer, what she may require at their hands, in the hour of her peril, and in defence of her sacred rights.

But I have said that my few words, at this time, must shape themselves by the sacredness of the House of God, and its special services at the present time. I may not reflect, therefore,

* The Holy Communion was to be administered.

upon the peculiarly unrighteous and unholy character of the war which is being waged against us. Such a topic might be reasonably expected to awaken angry and bitter feelings, unsuited to this place. For these there are provocations enough elsewhere, and they are of hourly developement. Let us hope, rather, that through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these feelings may find a temporary lull, in this sacred House of Prayer—where we have been humbly supplicating *forgiveness* for the sins and frailties of that fallen nature which, as a sad common inheritance, reduces all men, even our bitterest enemies, to the character of *Brethren*, before the pure eyes of the Majesty on high.

While a keen sense of our public wrongs, and of the injustice against which we are contending, may be permitted its reasonable influence in bracing up our patriotic citizen soldiery for the dangers, the trials and the hardships before them, that sentiment may not be unduly stimulated here, and *now*, with the intimations before our eyes, of that solemn *Sacrament* in which some—would to God it were all!—of these brave hearts before me, are expecting to renew their profession as followers of the *Prince of Peace*. Upon *them* I would affectionately urge

these two thoughts, in particular. I confess they have struck my mind very forcibly, and I feel persuaded that they will thank me for a suggestion well calculated, as I think, in the midst of all the angry excitement of the hour, to stir in their hearts, that spirit of gentleness and kindness, with which they must needs desire to approach the holy altar.

And first, let me ask you, could your thoughts be more profitably occupied at this holy Sacrament—more profitably and suitably as soldiers of the Cross, while yet, in a way entirely consistent with your character as soldiers of your country, and armed champions of her rights and honor; than in realizing—what we all know—that the war to which you are now summoned, is but the obvious and legitimate, and the long-looked-for fruit and consummation of a blind *fanaticism*, on the part of our public enemies. This is a pitiable spectacle; pitiable in the eyes of the Christian, pitiable in the eyes of every reflecting man—to see men of natures otherwise noble and estimable—of characters which in other respects are an ornament to our nature, and which have conferred honor and glory on our country, yea and on our common humanity itself; to see men, I say, of such high qualities

and attributes, marred and distorted, in their whole man ; thrown down from their rightful position, and transmuted almost into raving demons, by a blind, headlong, unreasoning, cruel, petrifying *fanaticism* :

“Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh.”

And now can you think—for I cannot—of any prayer which might more appropriately rise up in secret from your hearts, around this holy altar to-day—in behalf of these your unhappy fellow-men, though now become your public enemy—than that heaven-born prayer, hallowed forever, in having passed through the sacred lips of your loving and compassionate Saviour, and uttered, too, by Him, over those whose *fanaticism* was even then thrusting them blindly upon the perpetration of the *hughest sin* which has ever rested upon mortal soul,—those pregnant words—“Father *forgive* them, they *know not* what they do !”

And let the Christian spirit of these devout aspirations go with you to the theatre of war ; and in the flush of triumph—for, naught else do we anticipate for you—when victory shall perch on your banner, let the hallowed recollections of this hour, ensure for you, that noblest attribute of the soldier—mercy for the fallen foe.

The other thought which we would briefly press upon you, at this time, is this—we all expect *peace*—we all hope for it. *Perpetual warfare* could be contemplated with satisfaction only by fiends in human shape; and I am thoroughly persuaded that, burning as our brave citizen soldiery are with a sense of our public wrongs, and ready, to-morrow, to pour out their blood like water for their redress; and, carried away as our youth are, and raised almost out of themselves, by a noble ambition to signalize their patriotic valor on the bloody field—it were only the sanguinary *ruffian*; the loud-mouthed *bully*, fighting in the very savageness of their nature; it is only these, I say, whose hearts would not leap with joy, if, ere this day's setting sun, an authentic proclamation of peace—of peace on the just and reasonable terms which we demand—could be sounded in their ears. I doubt not, for a moment, that under many a brawny bosom among us, there beats a heart which, while ready to peril all that is most dear, and while urging its possessor on in full tramp to the battle field, is yet, by night and by day, and in the thickest din and wildest excitement of the hour, breathing forth silent aspirations unto *Him* who can sway the hearts of men,

that it would please him to cry out, with Omnipotent voice, to the fearful storm that is mustering around us, "Peace be still;" that He would be pleased to open the blind eyes of fanaticism; to subdue the mutual animosities and exasperations of the hour; and, through His providence, to restore to us, once more, the blessings of peace. Certain it is, that such is the noble spirit and example of the Christian President of our Confederacy, as impressed upon his recent Message to Congress. Let it be for an example to us all. And let me ask you, brave soldiers of your Country and of the Cross, and professed followers, many of you, of the Prince of Peace, if, with the badges of your soldiers calling upon you, any prayer could rise up in secret from your hearts, even around this holy altar, more appropriate to you, whether as Christians or as soldiers, than such a prayer as this?

Most sincerely do I rejoice that, in the orderings of Divine Providence, nearly the last day which you are to spend at home and among those you love and cherish, should offer to you a privilege so precious, as that to which the Church invites you this morning. May this holy Sacrament be accompanied by such appro-

priate thoughts and aspirations as have now been suggested; and may you find in it that *strength* which you will so greatly need in the work before you; and especially may you find here, that spiritual strength in which you may pass, unharmed, through peculiar temptations, while you shall be breathing a moral atmosphere so unwholesome to the Christian and so incongenial with his tastes. Whatever may be before you, you will not fail, I think, to look back to this solemn hour with heartfelt satisfaction, as it shall mingle itself in your thoughts, with the last scenes and events of home; while it will be equally fraught with soothing reflections, to those loved ones whom you are to leave behind, and whose hearts, while they cheerfully send you forth with their blessing, *must* yet be weighed down with sadness, as, after these excitements shall have passed away, busy thought shall follow you through the untried scenes upon which you will have entered.

But I have not strength to add more. What I have said is only what may becomingly be said by the Preacher of the Gospel of peace, and your loving Pastor, and in this place, where we are standing upon holy ground. At another time, and with other surroundings, other lan-

guage will be addressed to you. The Civilian, with soul stirring eloquence, will fire your patriotic ardor by a different class of appeals. Parents, Wives, Sisters, perhaps some who own a name scarcely less tender though less holy, shall cheer you onward and bid you God speed, with faces wreathed in smiles, albeit hearts be breaking underneath, they shall fill your bosoms with flowers, and strew them in your pathway: and booming artillery, and martial music, and the rousing hurrah of the vast multitude shall linger on your ears, as you are borne away into the dim distance, from straining eyes, and from loving and yearning hearts.

But to *me*, and standing *here*, there appertains, a different office. And now I shall only add may the Fatherly hand of our Good and Gracious God be ever over you: may He preserve you by His grace amid the peculiar temptations which shall beset you: may He watch over you by day and by night: may He strengthen you for the soldier's privations and hardships: may He inspire you with courage and firmness and collectedness in the hour of danger, and cover your heads in the day of battle. May He crown your righteous cause with victory; and, at last, in His great mercy, restore you, unharmed, to your homes, and to its loved ones, with hearts full of devout gratitude to your Almighty Protector.



